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THE MONTHLY GULL BULLETIN

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

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JULY MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 14th inst., at eight o'clock, in the Board Room of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners, Ferry Building, 2nd Floor, Room 19.

The speaker of the evening will be our own president, Dr. Frederick W. D'Evelyn who with his ready wit will assure everybody of an interesting evening. The subject is "Aasvogels—Scavengers of the Veld."

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JULY FIELD TRIP will be taken on Sunday, July 17th, to Golden Gate Park. Take McAllister car No. 5, "Beach" sign, to 43rd Avenue entrance on Fulton St. Bring lunch.

The usual route will be followed, skirting Chain of Lakes, and passing Stadium, Spreckels, Lloyd Lakes, ending at Japanese Tea Garden, where lunch will be eaten if the party so desires. This will give those who care to, an opportunity to attend the Sunday afternoon lecture at the California Academy of Sciences, at three o'clock.

Leader MR. CARL R. SMITH.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE JUNE MEETING: The one hundred twenty-third regular meeting of the Association was held on June 9th, in the Board Room of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners, with Dr. Frederick W. D'Evelyn, President, in the chair; Mrs. Carl Smith, Secretary.

Mr. Stanley C. Kirk, the scheduled speaker was unable to attend, but Mr. Robert R. Graham who substituted for Mr. Kirk using the same subject, "The Homing Pigeon, its History and Training," gave those present a most entertaining and instructive evening. Mr. Graham stated in part:

"No true bird lover can look into the history of the homer pigeon without gaining a great admiration and respect for these wonderous messengers of the air.

"Since the dawn of history, pigeons have performed a noble share of the world's work—love letters, news of battles, messages that have turned the history of the world all have, at times, been carried by pigeons. The earliest use of pigeons for transmitting messages in warfare was in 43 B. C., when Decimus Junius Brutus was besieged by Mark Antony. Brutus communicated with his consuls outside the city by pigeons that flew over the heads of the besiegers.

"It is interesting to know that as early as 1150 the Sultan of Bagdad established a postal system in which homing pigeons were the messengers, and this service was maintained for over a century.

"During the French Revolution of 1848 pigeons were used as the telegraph is used today, carrying messages for the French and Belgian newspapers. The time of the Franco-Prussian War, a postal pigeon service was maintained between Tours and Paris. Mail was delivered at the rate of half a franc a word, the messages being set up in small type, and then by means of microphotography, transferred to thin films of collodion, which were attached in quills to the bird's tail feathers.

"In the World War all Allied aviators were instructed to carry homing pigeons with them. Homers were also used by the Navy and Tank Corps, as well as by the fighting troops. Then twenty thousand pigeons were in active service in the Allied armies and auxiliary forces. Notwithstanding the smoke barrages, the everlasting roar of heavy artillery, bursting shrapnel and rifle fire, the homers carried through with their all-important messages.

"Pigeon racing is the national sport of Belgium. The Grand National of Belgium excites real interest throughout the country and attracts almost as much attention as do our baseball world series here.

"Light birds are fastest, but the big heavy birds generally win in the long distance events. Racing birds are flown from 10 miles to 1,000 miles, and are capable of 13 hours sustained flight. A good average speed is 1200 yards a minute. The American record for old birds at 300 miles is 1848 yards a minute—faster than many American Express trains.

"The training of the birds is a most interesting feature. Homers mate for life. They breed all the year round, although it is best to breed in February and March.

"The 'squeakers,' as young birds are called until they have learned to fly, are fed by the parent birds on a semi-digested food called pigeon milk. On leaving the nest the young rapidly become self-feeders and readily take to grain food. The early training of the homer begins at feeding time. Pigeons readily differentiate sounds, which seem identical to you and me. When the birds are being fed a 'can rattle' is used—merely an ordinary tin can with a half-dozen pebbles in it. This can is rattled while the grain is scattered on the floor. The birds are never called to the sound of the rattle without rewarding them with grain.

"Some pigeon fanciers train squeakers from the day they are hatched by using the can rattle while the parents are feeding them.

"At the age of 25 to 28 days before the youngster has learned to fly he is removed from the nesting compartment and placed in a separate loft. This loft is equipped with a wire trap door which will permit of ingress but not egress. In front of the door is a small platform and the bird is placed on the platform just outside the trap door. Inside the loft the trainer rattles the 'dinner bell,' and instinctively the young bird comes right through the wires in response to the sound and to satisfy his appetite.

"After the bird has learned to trap successfully it is released a few inches away from the landing board, and again the 'dinner bell' is sounded. When the bird becomes stronger the distance is increased from the landing until the point of release is as far away as desired. In these early stages the bird is released from four different angles so it will be accustomed to sensing its way back home. After about a week training the trap may be left open and birds allowed to fly at will. At the age of six weeks, after the first moult, the bird is taken a mile from home and released. The distance is increased from day to day up to 25 miles. At the 25-mile stage the distance is gradually increased until the bird is well able to take care of itself 100 miles from home. It is well to release the birds one at a time. A bird accustomed to

waiting for the other birds from its loft to accompany it will lose time in homing.

"Messages are written on tissue thin 'pigeongrams' folded into a very small space and inserted in an aluminum capsule, which is attached to leg. The capsule is specially made and must be fastened to the bird's leg firmly but without pressure. Never attempt to tie a message with string either to leg or tail."

It is a justifiable pride to record that a veteran and pioneer Californian industry (Sperry Flour Co.) initiated the use of homers as a commercial first aid factor in forwarding emergency orders. It is an activity that has broadened into the wider service of news agency in important civic or state events. Over 400 homers are in actual employment by the company.

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BIRDS OF THE AIR HAVE THEIR REFUGE.

The above is the title of an article in the May issue of *Fireman's Fund Record*. The article says in part:

"During a lull in a hurricane 300 miles east of Galveston Bar last August, the sun came out bright enough to allow some pictures to be taken on the Steamer 'West Quechee' en route from Galveston to Hamburg. The record shows that the ship was in the center of the storm for two hours and that the force of the wind was 100 miles an hour.

"We hear much of the sanctuary for wild animals and birds. What a haven of refuge the spars and rigging of this vessel offered to our storm-driven feathered friends! They perched on the stays, cargo falls, wireless antennae, and even on the rails of the bridge and the awning stanchions over them. How hard they were put to it for a resting place is amply demonstrated by the way in which they remained on their perches while the photographs were taken. Furthermore, there were a number of men on or about the bridge in the course of their duties."

From the photographs the birds appear to be swallows.

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THE JUNE FIELD TRIP was taken on Sunday, June 12th, to Tennessee Cove, Marin County, under the always delightful leadership of Mrs. Kibbe. The weather was ideal for hiking, cooled sufficiently by an ocean breeze, which was gentle until the high bluffs overlooking the ocean, were reached; then it was difficult to keep hats on. During the morning the fog blew in occasionally, but finally left, so that the latter part of the day was clear.

While crossing the Bay there were no unusual birds to greet the party; only gulls, most of them young, and Farallone cormorants. Almost immediately after leaving the train a black-crowned night heron was noticed by one of the members. He was a most obliging sort of a bird, allowing several of the group to approach quite closely.

One of the guests was an indefatigable and successful nest hunter. His efforts inspired others to search for them too, and the reward was very interesting. Just after leaving the highway, in fact, under a bridge on the highway, four barn swallows nests were found; the swallow was building one of these while an appreciative audience observed. In the center of the canyon, if so it may be called, eight linnets' nests were found, built in the tall abundant clumps of thistles. Two of them had baby birds in them and the others, either three or four eggs. A gold finch nest was also found. When

passing the last bridge a barn swallow was seen to fly out from under it; this tempted those of the party who were near by and underneath the bridge another beautiful nest was discovered. Pictures were taken of some of the nests.

The usual route was followed, along the dirt road, that marks the center of the canyon, passing the various ranches until the last one was reached; then turning off onto an old abandoned road, that leads up the hillside in an easy grade. By following this road and a trail the party soon found themselves at the top of the high cliffs with the Pacific below them.

In a protected spot, from where Pirate's Cove could be looked down upon, the lunch hour was spent. After lunch a few of the party went down to Pirate's Cove, while the others rested. It was hoped that Baird cormorants' nests might be found there, but none were. When the wanderers returned to the lunch place, Mrs. Kibbe led the party on, following the top of the bluffs and down a hillside to Tennessee Cove. Again a short stop was made and one member, who had a moving picture camera with him, brought it into play. He had used it quite often before. Here, too, a Baird cormorant's nest was found.

On the way back, through the canyon, many stops were made, to listen to the bird symphony orchestras. On one hill a wheezy song caused members to pause and after some searching, a number of Bryant Savannah sparrows were located, singing joyously and living up to their reputations. Birds do not always do that! This delayed part of the group and they found on arriving at the station that a number had caught an earlier train.

It proved to be an especially enjoyable trip for everyone.

Birds encountered were: Western and California gulls, Farallone and Baird cormorants; black-crowned night heron; coast California quail, northern turkey vulture, western red-tailed hawk; willow downy woodpecker, Monterey red-shafted flicker; Anna and Allen humming birds, black phoebe, California horned lark; southern coast Steller and northwestern California jays, western American crow, San Francisco red-winged blackbird, western meadow lark, California Brewer blackbird; California linnet, willow American and green-backed Arkansas goldfinches, northern pine siskin, Bryant Savannah, Nuttall white-crowned and Marin song sparrows; San Francisco spotted and brown towhees, Pacific black-headed grosbeak, lazuli bunting; northern cliff and barn swallows; lutescent orange-crowned, California yellow and golden pileolated warblers; Vigor's Bewick wren; Marin chestnut-backed chickadee, Pacific coast bush-tit and ruddy wren-tit; Pacific russet-backed thrush, western Mexican bluebird. Forty-two species.

Members in attendance: The Misses Boegle, Ethel and Martha Crum, H. T. Cohen, Haefner, Pettit; Mesdames Bunker, Bracelin, Kibbe, Mexia, Myer, Parry; Dr. Card, Messrs. Braemer, Bunker, Cliff, Myer, Parry. As guests: The Misses Muriel Chadwick, Beverly Fisher; Mesdames Lockerbie, Stephens; Messrs. Lockerbie, Pemberton, Stephens and Scouts Henry Betteiman, Bill Fisher, Caro Jacobs, Felix and Harold Juda, William Rousseau and Kenneth Swerin. Eighteen members and fourteen guests.

M. Bracelin, *Historian.*

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

FOR THE STUDY AND THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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Meets second Thursday of each month at 8:00 p.m., in the Board Room of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners, Ferry Building, Second Floor, Room 19.

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